DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 090 CG 018 292

AUTHOR Yager, Geoffrey G.
TITLE The Effects of Level of Simulation upon Observers' Ratings of a Counselor in a Role-Played Interaction.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (69th, Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counseling Effectiveness; *Counselor Evaluation; *Counselor Training; Graduate Students; Higher Education; Observation; Role Models; *Role Playing; Sex Differences; *Simulation; *Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS *Vicarious Participation

ABSTRACT

Since the vicarious participation analogue is frequently used to provide modeling of appropriate counselor skills to beginning counselor trainees, this model and its various forms are of particular relevance to counselor training. An investigation was designed to examine the effects of the level of the simulation of a counseling session upon volunteer subjects' evaluations of a role-played counselor. Female counseling students (N=44) were randomly assigned to rate: (1) a videotaped counselor making interchangeable empathy responses to a client; (2) a videotaped counselor who made the same responses while the subject read a transcript of the clients' responses; (3) a live counselor making the identical responses while the subject read the client statements; or (4) the counselor from responses on a written transcript with no videotape observation or role-playing on the part of the subject. A second sample of 22 male counseling students were randomly assigned to conditions 1 and 4. The measures completed by subjects included the Counselor Rating Form, two scales from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory, a measure assessing the counselor's ability to help the client to explore her concerns, and a measure of overall counselor effectiveness. Multivariate analysis of variance of the data indicated no significant differences in ratings of counselor effectiveness for either level of simulation or sex of subject. (Author/NRB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED258090

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Effects of Level of Simulation upon Observers' Ratings of a Counselor in a Role-played Interaction

Geoffrey G. Yager

Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

and

University of Cincinnati

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association

Chicago, Illinois

April, 1985

CG 018292

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Geoffrey G. Yager

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running head: LEVEL OF SIMULATION AND OBSERVERS' RATINGS

Abstract

This study addressed the question: how does the level of simulation of a counseling session affect observers' evaluations of a role-played counselor? Forty-four female counseling student volunteers were randomly assigned to rate (a) a videotaped counselor making interchangeable empathy responses to a client, (b) a videotaped counselor who made the same responses while the subject read a transcript of the client's responses, (c) a live counselor making the identical responses while the subject read the client statements, or (d) the counselor from responses on a written transcript. An additional twenty-two male counseling trainees were randomly assigned to read the transcript or to watch the videotape of counselor and client. Dependent measures included perceptions of the counselor's overall effectiveness, empathy, level of regard, expertness, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and ability to aid client exploration. Multivariate analyses of variance of the data indicated no significant differences on either of the independent variables of primary interest: level of simulation or sex of subject. Possible explanations for the lack of significant findings are discussed.

The Effects of Level of Simulation upon Observers' Ratings of a Counselor in a Role-played Interaction

The objective of this investigation was to determine the effects of the level of the simulation of a counseling session upon volunteer subjects' perceptions of the counselor "observed." Do subjects respond less positively to a role-played counselor if they are further removed from the position of the client?

Cowen (1961) first introduced the term, experimental analogue of psychotherapy, nearly twenty-five years ago. In subsequent years, the experimental analogue has become one of the primary methods of researching the complex process of therapy. Zytowski's (1966) review of the experimental analogue research in counseling introduced the classification of the "vicarious participation" study, in which the subject observes rather than participates in a counseling session, as a type of counseling analogue "near the outer edge of the definition of an analog" (p.238). Munley (1974), in a later review of the literature on analogue research, suggested that future researchers might well compare different types of counseling analogues.

Previous research has begun to address Munley's charge. Several studies, comparing quasi-counseling (the subject talks directly to a counselor about a counseling-related issue) with vicarious participation, have substantiated that subjects who interact with a counselor will rate that individual more highly than if they have observed the same counselor in interaction with someone else (Dell & LaCrosse, 1978; Helms, 1976; McKitrick, 1981; Zlotlow & Allen, 1981).

However, what may be of most interest to the counselor

educator are the differences between types of vicarious participation. Since the vicarious participation analogue is heavily involved in providing initial modeling of appropriate counselor skills to beginning counselor trainees, it is this model and its various forms that is of particular relevance to counselor training. The present investigation was designed to examine the attitudes that observers develop as related to increased levels of vicarious participation in a counseling session. The attitudes of particular interest are those related to the observers' judgments of the counselor's performance.

Hardin and Yanico (1981) carried out a similar study to that involved in the present investigation. They compared subject perceptions of a counselor based upon (a) reading of a transcript of a session, (b) listening to a audiotape of the same session, or (c) viewing a videotape of the session. The results indicated that listening to an audiotape or viewing a videotape led to similar perceptions of the counselor. However, one male group, who read only the transcript of the counseling session, rated the counselor lower in trustworthiness (Counselor Rating Form, CRF, Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) than did any of the female groups and lower than the males who watched the video.

A study by McKitrick (1981) had indicated that there were differences between observers' perceptions of a counselor depending on the perspective from which they observed the counseling session. Those who could see only the counselor rated the counselor more highly, on both expertness and trustworthiness (CRF, Barak & LaCrosse, 1975), than those who saw both counselor and client.

Based upon the results of the studies cited above, the

researcher decided to investigate four levels of vicarious participation in the counseling process. These four levels involved a crossing of two factors, only the first of these has been previously addressed in the research: (a) presence or absence of videotape observation and (b) presence or absence of a subject's role-playing (perhaps more accurately described as a dramatic reading) during the review of the counseling session of interest. The crossing of these two conditions leads to four experimental groups: the transcript only group is a nonvideo/non role-playing treatment; the observation of a videotape of both client and counselor is a video/non role-playing treatment; the observation of the counselor-only videotape with dramatic reading of the client responses is a video/role-playing treatment, and the dramatic reading of the transcript with a live counselor is a nonvideo/role-playing treatment.

One additional independent variable of interest in the present study was sex of the observer. This variable is related to a finding that has been repeatedly demonstrated in a number of investigations (Bernstein & Figioli, 1983; Carter, 1978; Hardin & Yanico, 1981; Snelbecker, 1962): men rate a counselor lower on performance measures than do women. One investigation (Kaul & Schmidt, 1971), however, had compared male and female raters of a counselor's trustworthiness and had found no sex differences. Unlike the previously cited studies involving college-aged students (or younger, as in the case of Bernstein and Figioli), the Kaul and Schmidt investigation had included graduate counseling students as half of their sample. Since the sex differences reported were "close" to significant ($p<.17$), it

seemed possible that gender-related differences in counselor ratings might be a product of the age level of the clients most commonly used in these investigations.

Yet another helpful explanation of the gender effect was offered by Bernstein and Figioli (1983). They argued that females may tend to seek out counseling more readily and feel more at ease with the self-exploration expected in counseling than are their male counterparts, and, as a result, the females could be expected to rate a counselor more highly. The gender differences may well be present in public school and in college students, but they certainly should not be present in graduate-level counseling trainees! Thus, the present investigation incorporated both men and women counseling graduate students, with the expectation that there would be no differences between the sexes on their ratings of the counselor.

Method

Subjects

The sixty-six subjects involved in this investigation were counseling masters degree students at Shippensburg University. The subjects' average age was 28.8 years, while their racial breakdown was 93.9% Caucasion, 4.6% Black, and 1.5% Oriental. Forty-four of the volunteer subjects were women: these subjects were assigned randomly to all four of the possible treatment conditions. Because the client on the videotape had been a woman, the two conditions involving subject role-playing only applied to the women in the sample. Therefore, male volunteers were assigned only to the transcript or the counselor/client videotape groups.

Procedures

To assess the major objectives stated above, a role-play was developed that would be maximally interesting to the subjects. A script for the initial videotaping was not prepared, but the client (a female graduate student in counseling) was given a detailed description of the role-played concerns and the feelings underlying those concerns. The concerns selected related to the anxiety generated from an issue only recently recognized in the literature: "date rape" or "acquaintance rape" ("Date Rape," 1984). The role-play involved an undergraduate client who had become pregnant as a result of forced sex with a student she knew fairly well. She had no intention of seeing this person any further, and she expressed great confusion and fear as she spoke with the counselor. She reported to the counselor that having been drunk at the time of the rape and having known the person who attacked her had led led her to decide not to report the rape when it occurred. The role-play served to bring out the client's continued confusion about her role in what had happened.

An unrehearsed counseling session was carried out with an empathic counselor (each response was rated at or above the interchangeable level on Carkhuff's empathic understanding scale). The 15 minute session was videotaped. After the session, a written transcript of the videotape was prepared. This transcript served as the "script" for the second videotape: the same male counselor made exactly the same statements he had made earlier while looking directly into the camera: no client was present on the videotape and no client verbalizations were recorded on the tape. Instead of client responding, silent pauses (slightly shorter than the role-played client's actual

response) were included in this videotape.

Thus, four levels of simulated counseling sessions were created in this fashion:

1. In the "highest" level of simulation, subjects initially read the transcript silently to themselves. Shortly afterward, a live counselor (the same individual as on the videotapes) and the subject met in a counseling room and carried out a "dramatic reading" role-play of the written script.

2. The second level of simulation incorporated the second videotape. After reading the transcript to themselves, subjects watched the counselor on tape as he made responses directly to the viewer. The subject role-played the client by reading the prepared script as realistically as possible.

3. The third level of simulation involved subjects only at the vicarious level. Subjects silently read the transcript of the session and, subsequently, watched the client and counselor in the videotaped session.

4. The "lowest" level of simulation involved no videotape observation or role-playing. Subjects in this condition read only the transcript.

At the start of the study, subjects were informed that it was an investigation of the reactions that people have to a specific counselor in a given interaction. Subjects randomly assigned to one of the active dramatic reading groups were administered the treatment individually. The videotape observation and transcript reading treatments were carried out in groups of five or six at a time.

Prior to the beginning of treatment, each subject was

encouraged to read the counselor rating instruments to get a feel for the kinds of observations that they would be expected to make with respect to the counseling interaction they were about to review. The following instructions were read to each subject just before the actual review began:

> Although the client's expressed feelings in this counseling session may well be very unrelated to your own personal concerns, I would like you to try to identify with this client as best you can. Try to understand how important the expressed concern is to this client. Imagine as you review this counseling session that you were actually in this client's position with her feelings. From her perspective, you will be formulating impressions of the counselor and of this effectiveness . . . Please answer the questions on the counselor rating instruments from this perspective.

Those subjects who were in the dramatic reading conditions were also instructed to "read the client's statements in as dramatic and as realistic a manner as possible."

Immediately following the simulation, subjects completed their ratings of the counselor.

Instrumentation

The measures employed in the investigation consisted of the Counselor Rating Form (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975), two scales from the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (Level of Regard and Empathic Understanding, Barrett-Lennard, 1962), a measure assessing the counselor's ability to help the client to explore her concerns (Yager, Heilman, & Melchior, 1984) and a measure of overall counselor effectiveness.

The CRF consists of thirty-six 7-point bipolar items

reflecting three behavior dimensions: expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. Twelve items correspond to each dimension, with scores ranging from 12 to 84 on each scale. Higher scores indicate perceptions of greater expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. LaCrosse and Barak (1976) report split half reliabilities of .87, .85, and .91 for expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness, respectively. The present investigation's Cronbach alpha estimates of internal consistency reliability for these same three measures were .92, 0.87, and .89.

The Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory was originally designed to measure the Rogerian dimensions of facilitative growth in counseling. The scale initially had four subscales. Only two of these scales were included in this investigation. "Level of regard" was intended to measure the extent to which the counselor demonstrated respect and regard for the client. "Empathic understanding" was designed to measure the amount of understanding the counselor expressed for the client's situation and feelings. Both scales involve responses to Likert-type 7-point scales: 18 items for the regard scale and 16 for the empathy scale. Barrett-Lennard (1962) reported reliabilities of 0.93 for regard and .86 for empathic understanding. The present investigation's internal consistency reliabilities for these two scales were .94 and .86.

The final two measures were designed as part of a series of investigations reported in Yager, Heilman and Melchior's (1984) paper. The "client exploration" measure was developed to assess the observer's rating of the counselor's effectiveness in

encouraging the client to undertake and accomplish self-exploration. The measure involves subjective ratings of 16 items on 7-point Likert-type scales. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency reliability for the exploration measure was calculated for this study at .87. Additionally, a factor analysis of the exploration items combined with the Barrett-Lennard items indicated that the exploration items tended to form their own unique factor.

The Overall Effectiveness scale was a used to measure the observer's overall rating of the counselor. This scale, despite being only three items, showed an internal consistency reliability of .86.

Design

The design for the investigation was a 2 X 2 factorial design with an incomplete third factor. The dependent variables were the seven counselor ratings described above. The live dramatic readings (role-playing) groups only involved female subjects. Thus, for the purpose of the statistical analysis, the experimental design was divided into two 2 X 2 factorial designs, each analyzable with a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The first of these two designs involved only women subjects, including the factors of (a) role-playing (present or not present) and (b) videotape observation (present or not present). The second 2 X 2 MANOVA incorporated the factors of sex and treatment (videotape observation vs. reading the transcript).

Results

The results of the two MANOVAs of primary interest are reported in Tables 1 and 2. In neither analysis were there

significant differences on any of the possible sources of variation. There were no differences between role-played (dramatic reading) treatments and those treatments without the active reading. There were no significant differences between groups that either observed or did not observe a videotape. There were no male/female differences in the ratings of the counselor. There were no differences between groups that saw a videotape and those which only read the transcript. Finally, there were no significant interactions between the above variables. Since the multivariate tests were not significant, proceeding further to examine the univariate differences on specific measures would not be justified.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

Discussion

Counselor educators often employ videotaped role-plays to demonstrate certain counseling skills. If the impact of the counseling session had been very different for an observer than for a more actively-involved client, it might have been argued that counselor educators need to develop video demonstrations designed to involve student observers more directly.

However, as is clear from the data, such was not the case! Stone (1984) has recently written, "it is clear that what makes analogue research findings of interest is that they help us understand" (p. 109). Hopefully, then, the value of the present research on analogue research may be found in what it has helped us to understand! The author's speculations in this direction comprise the remainder of this paper.

First of all, the present data support the notion expressed earlier in the paper that male and female graduate-level counseling students will not rate a counselor differently, even in the case where the role-play involved in the rating has to do with an issue that could be seen as gender-related: "date rape."

Secondly, it is the firm belief of this author that the selection of the role-play demonstrated on the initial videotape had the largest impact upon the subsequent lack of significant differences between the variety of simulation levels of participation. The questions that the counseling students asked in their debriefings, following participation, indicated that in each treatment condition, some subjects were unsure if the client had actually been raped or if the counselor had been leading her (inappropriately) to look at the situation as if it had been a rape. This confusion was aided by the client's apparent lack of emotionality during the videotape and, subsequently, in the written transcript of the videotaped session. Although the lack of emotionality in a client as confused and defended as the woman in this role-play is not unrealistic, a fifteen minute exposure for a relatively inexperienced observer may simply be insufficient time to allow an clear understanding of that client. For the counselor educator, this finding (or, more accurately, this lack of a finding) may well indicate that we need to take great care in selecting the client roles for demonstrations if we wish to most effectively demonstrate a given counseling skill.

Thirdly, the subject debriefings also indicated that the dramatic role-play reading groups were probably much less involved with the session than had been anticipated. The process

of reading the words of another is more difficult and requires more concentrated attention than it might appear. Thus, these two groups may, in fact, have been so focused on "reading their lines" that they missed some of the expected impact of a closer simulation of the counseling interaction. (Interestingly, one of those observers who did seem to be more aware of the counselor than most, indicated that the live counselor seemed to be reading his lines in a monotone with very little feeling, and this tended to make the evaluation somewhat lower than it might have been otherwise.)

This study has offered an examination of the possible impact of several different levels of simulation within a vicarious participation analogue to counseling. Although no significant differences were found, the author admits to a reluctance to let go of his research hypothesis. It still seems likely that given a different, perhaps a more straightforwardly-emotional role-play that observers who were involved in more direct simulations of the counseling interview of interest would rate the effectiveness of the counselor more positively.

References

Barak, A. & LaCrosse, M. B. (1975). Multidimensional perception of counselor behavior. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 22, 471-476.

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1962). Therapist response and therapeutic change. Psychological Monographs, 76 (43, Whole No. 562)

Bernstein, B. L. & Figioli, S. W. (1983). Gender and credibility introduction effects as perceived counselor characteristics. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30, 506-513.

Carter, J. A. (1978). Impressions of counselor as a function of counselor physical attractiveness. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 25, 28-34.

Cowen, E. L. (1961). The experimental analogue: An approach to research in psychotherapy. Psychological Reports, 8, 9-10.

'Date rape': A serious campus problem that few talk about. (1984, December). The Chronicle of Higher Education, 24(15), 1, 12.

Dell, D. M. & LaCrosse, M. B. (1978). Audiovisual versus quasi-counseling analogues: A comparative study. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 46, 595-602.

Hardin, S. I. & Yanico, B. J. (1981). A comparison of modes of presentation in vicarious participation counseling analogues. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28, 540-543.

Helms, J. E. (1976). A comparison of two types of counseling analogue. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 23, 422-427.

Kaul, T. J. & Schmidt, L. D. (1971). Dimensions of interviewer trustworthiness. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 18, 542-548.

LaCrosse, M. D. & Barak, A. (1976). Differential perception of counselor behavior. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 23, 170-172.

McKitrick, D. (1981). Generalizing from counseling analogue research on subjects' perceptions of counselors. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28, 357-360.

Munley, P. H. (1974). A review of counseling analogue research methods. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 21, 320-330.

Snelbecker, G. E. (1962). Factors influencing college students' person-perceptions of psychotherapists in a laboratory analog. Dissertation Abstracts International, 22, 3928. (University Microfilms No. 62-00966)

Yager, G. G., Heilman, S. B., & Melchior, W. C. (1984, April). Good counseling; bad counseling: Who can tell the difference? Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.

Zlotlow, S. F. & Allen, G. J. (1981). Comparison of analogue strategies for investigating the influence of counselors' physical attractiveness. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 28, 194-202.

Zytowski, D. G. (1966). The study of therapy outcomes via experimental analogs: A review. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 13, 235-240.

Table 1

Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Video by Dramatic Reading Factors on the Seven Measures of Counselor Performance: Counselor Rating Form Expertness, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness; Barrett-Lennard Empathy and Regard; Client Exploration; Counselor Effectiveness

Source of Variance	d.f.	Multivariate F	p<
Videotape vs. No Video	7,34	1.01	.44
Dramatic Role Reading	7,34	1.39	.24
Video by Role Reading Interaction	7,34	1.63	.16

Table 2

Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Sex by Transcript vs. Video Treatment Factors on the Seven Measures of Counselor Performance: Counselor Rating Form Expertness, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness; Barrett-Lennard Empathy and Regard; Client Exploration; Counselor Effectiveness

Source of Variance	*d.f.*	Multivariate *F*	*p*<
Sex	7,34	.81	.59
Treatment (Transcript vs. Videotape)	7,34	1.51	.20
Sex by Treatment Interaction	7,34	1.71	.14